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OTTAWA

Truckers heading to Ottawa to protest vaccine mandate

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Truckers from across Canada are heading to the nation's capital to protest a mid-January mandate which requires drivers returning from the United States who are not fully vaccinated to quarantine.

Organizers say the border policy places added pressure on an already strained supply chain.

Hundreds of big rigs are rolling across the country en route to Ottawa in what some are calling a show of solidarity.

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The 'freedom convoy' which left from B.C. on Sunday, is spurred by new rules at Canadian land-border crossings. Starting Jan. 15, the federal government began requiring all truckers crossing the border from the United States into Canada to be vaccinated.

And as of Jan. 23, all non-Americans entering the United States at a land border must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The Canadian Trucking Alliance issued a statement saying it does not support and "strongly disapproves" of any protests on roadways, highways and bridges.

"The vast majority of the Canadian trucking industry is vaccinated with the overall industry vaccination rate among truck drivers closely mirroring that of the general public," the alliance said in a statement on its website.

"Accordingly, most of our nation's hard-working truck drivers are continuing to move cross-border and domestic freight to ensure our economy continues to function."

However, Mike Millian, president & CEO with the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada, says drivers who are not fully vaccinated pose little threat.

"Truck drivers spent most of the time in the cab by themselves they're isolated and hardly ever interact with the shipper or receiver a lot of that is done through paperwork," says Millian.

"We're concerned that his mandate is going to cause more harm to public health than it's going to help because of the shortages of essential supplies that we may see in our shelves."

Those shortages can be seen at some grocery stores, which have seen a decrease in availability of some internationally produced items. But industry experts say food will not run dry and that it's Omicron's rapid spread that is mostly to blame.

"The vaccine mandate at the border, it is probably going to impact some food but probably it's going to impact price of food as well," says Sylvain Charlebois, [senior director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab](#) at Dalhousie University in Halifax.

"Right now freight costs have doubled in the last ten days for food being trucked from the U.S. into Canada so obviously because of supply-chain economic it will eventually get to us the consumer."

A GoFundMe page for the Freedom Convoy has raised more than \$3 million to cover food, fuel and other expenses.

"We are taking our fight to the doorsteps of our Federal Government and demanding that they cease all mandates against its people," a message on the page states. "Small businesses are being destroyed, homes are being destroyed, and people are being mistreated and denied fundamental necessities to survive."

The western fleet will be joined by truckers from Ontario as well as the Maritimes and is expected to arrive in Ottawa on Saturday.

- with files from Josh Pringle, CTV News Ottawa

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A trucker tapes a sign on the side of his truck before departing with a cross-country convoy destined for Ottawa to protest a federal vaccine mandate for truckers in Delta, B.C. on Sunday, Jan. 23, 2022. (Darryl Dyck / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

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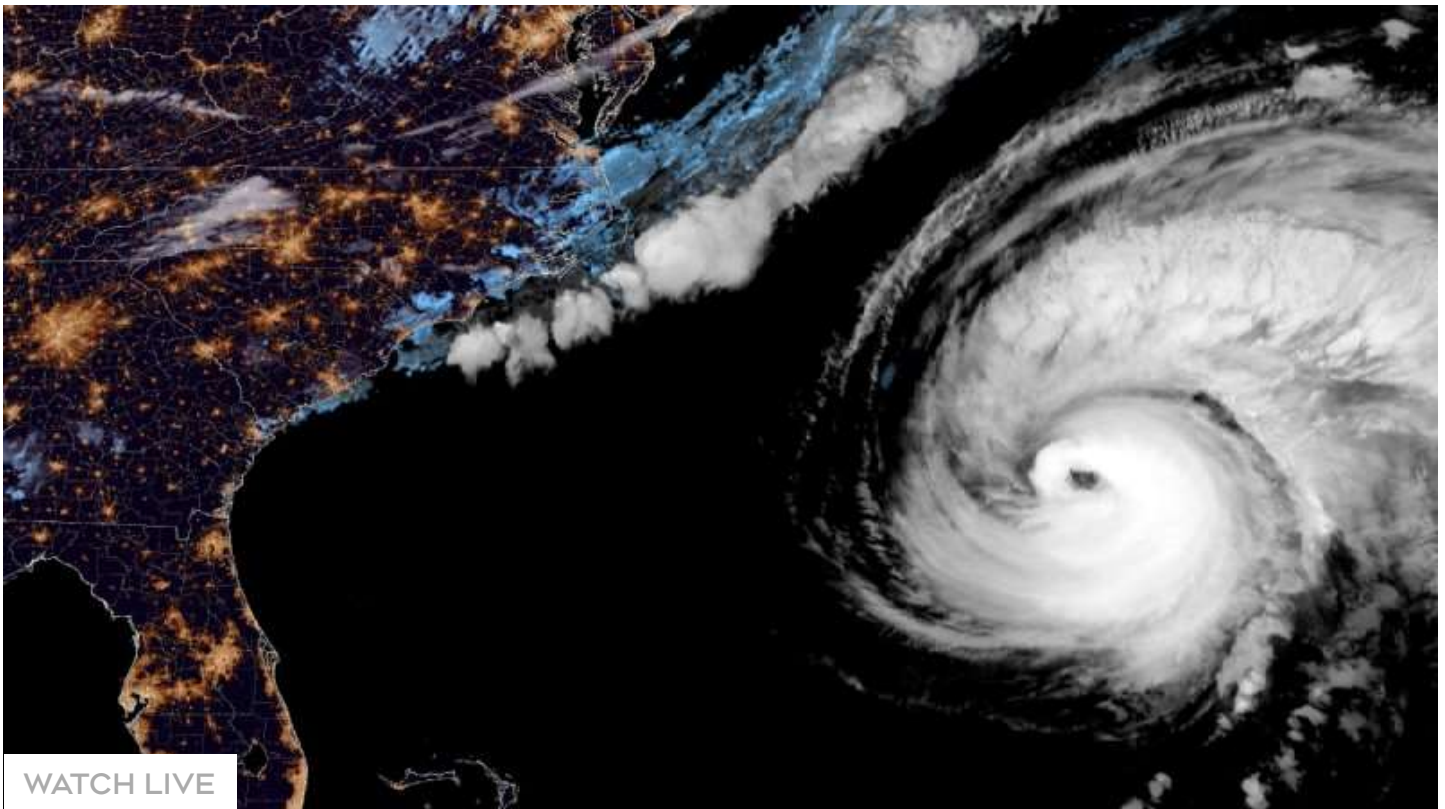
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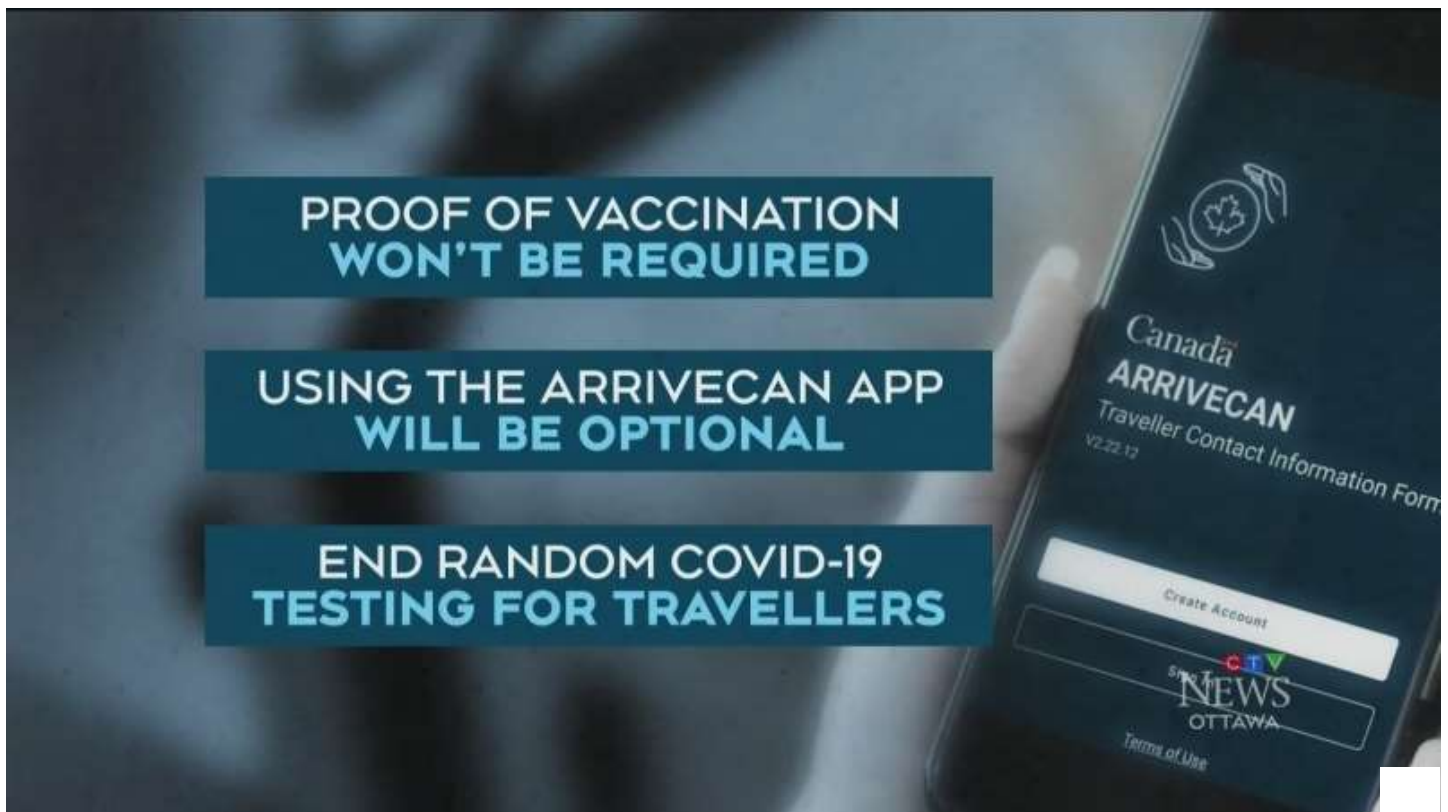
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